

341ST SPACE WING

Malmstrom Air Force Base



by Captain Todd Younkin

It's 0900 and the sun has yet to peek through the clouds over central Montana. Although the snow from the previous week's blizzard still lines the asphalt and surrounding area, the Malmstrom AFB flightline bustles with over 40 vehicles and more than 120 personnel.

This scenario really is not all that different from your average base, except for one important fact. Malmstrom's flightline covers over 23,500 square miles of roads, mountains and grasslands, all centered around Malmstrom in America's Last Best Place.

Sound familiar? If you've never visited or been stationed at a base with ICBMs, you may not have a clear idea of the unique challenges presented by an extended flightline. Hopefully, this article will present a clear image of how the men and women of the 341st Comptroller Squadron interact in this environment and how we have become just one of the team.

Every morning an average of 100 personnel and 28 vehicles dispatch to relieve the previous tour's security forces, missile field chefs, facility managers, and missile combat crews. The cops, chefs, and facility managers return after a three-day rotation, while the combat crews rotate out the following day. Some of these troops travel over 150 miles just to reach their duty location and start their 24- or 72-hour shift. As you can imagine, with the ever-changing weather and abundance of scenery and wildlife, each trip presents new and different challenges.

Excelling in this environment means providing the best possible service to all customers many of whom spend over 75 percent of their duty time away from the base. For these troops it becomes critical that we take care of their



problems correctly the first time, enabling them to focus on their mission, whether it's security, logistics, or operations.

To this end, we make an aggressive effort to ensure all customers' needs are met during the first visit. A newly-renovated customer service area provides a comfortable, efficient service environment benefiting both customers and technicians. But we do more than just take care of the issue at hand. Weekly training and focused noncommissioned officers work to make sure the airman at the counter asks the right follow-on questions, anticipating our customers' needs.



We work several base-specific issues such as the accurate, timely processing of missed meals forms. While this is a rarity at most bases, we process a large number due to the unpredictable nature of the mission performed by our customers. Our ability to process these claims quickly is critical to ensuring the financial security of our young airmen. They rely on us and expect us to pay them correctly, on time, every time.

We are also able to hone our own combat and deployment skills. Our year-round Top Dollar training is held in the same esteem as the training for Guardian Challenge, the annual Air Force Space Command competition.



A banner announcing our 1998 Air Force championship hangs proudly in our co-located club, right next to banners proclaiming Malmstrom's many Guardian Challenge championships. We are treated as equals and have earned that respect through our hard work and achievements. Our credibility is high because we have proven ourselves more than just support personnel.

Our standing in the Malmstrom community is one of credibility—giving the right answer the first time; and being trusted for our accurate, ethical, advice as the honest brokers for the 341st SW. Leadership has made us a by-name request for positions on many base leadership groups, including the Deputy Commander Advisory Council, Business Strategies Team, Base Requirements Advisory Group, and the Less with Less, Smarter Efficiencies Development Team.



Insightful, accurate advice and an ability to obtain consensus earn us the respect of the commanders and validate our place on the team. The camaraderie experienced by those in our mission and the relative isolation of the base helps to build our sense of "One Team, One Fight." In fact that same commitment to the entire team has enabled our base to be very competitive amongst our peers. We earned the title of AFSPC Fiscal Year 1999 Comptroller Squadron of the Year, and five other Malmstrom units were named best in AFSPC in their respective categories. Overall, our Wing won over 80 higher-level awards during FY99!



Our 1998 Air Force Top Dollar victory has endeared us to our warrior brethren who have won the Blanchard trophy two years in a row at Guardian Challenge.

All of these successes combined to help make Malmstrom one of the Air Force's top three finalists for the Installation Excellence Award, which focuses on all aspects of the mission including resource manage-

ment. Team Malmstrom is riding high and the 341st Comptroller Squadron has played a major role in mission accomplishment and recognition achievements.